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JACK STACHEL

**HOW DO WE
RAISE THE
QUESTION
OF A
LABOR
PARTY?**

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THE POLITICAL SITUATION AND THE LABOR PARTY

By EARL BROWDER

(Extract from report to Central Committee Meeting, January, 1935)

OUR resolution points out that the political changes that have taken place in 1934 among the masses demand that we review our whole attitude towards the question of the Labor Party. One feature of our approach to this question has remained constant throughout the whole period since 1928: The correct basic approach to the question, which we have never changed, was formulated by the Sixth World Congress in 1928. At that time we were faced with a situation in which, practically, there was no mass movement for a Labor Party. We had to determine how we should readjust ourselves towards this question when there was no mass movement for it.

The question was greatly discussed in the Commissions of the Sixth World Congress, and finally, the decision which was written into the thesis of the Congress was that proposed by Stalin. I will read it to you—it is brief, only a few lines—but it stands as an essentially correct approach for this whole period, when we opposed practical proposals for a Labor Party, as well as now when we decide again to revive the question.

1928 "On the question of the organizing of the Labor Party, the Congress resolves that the Party concentrate its attention on the work in the trade unions, on organizing the unorganized, etc., and in this way lay the basis for the practical realization of the slogan of a broad Labor Party organized from below."

In 1929, a year after the Sixth World Congress, in discussing what this means practically in our concrete work in the United States, we came to the conclusion that this correct orientation required that we should come out against all of the current proposals then being made for the organization of a Labor Party. We declared that any practical steps towards organizing a Labor Party in those conditions could only result in the building of a new appendage of the old parties. The only ones who were practically for a Labor Party would have been the Communists, the narrow movement of the Socialist Party and the

few scattered bureaucrats. True, the process of radicalization of the masses under the impact of the crisis was already beginning then, but this radicalization of the masses was not taking such forms as to give promise to any immediate mass Labor Party emerging. The best proof that our judgment was correct at that time is the fact that in the five years that have intervened, nobody has been able to do anything practical with the idea of a Labor Party.

Situation Is Changing

It is clear now, when we look back over these years, that if we had been playing around with the slogan of a Labor Party in the absence of a mass movement it would not have advanced us one step. We would not have developed a Labor Party and we would have taken attention away from the basic tasks of the movement directly connected with what was going on among the masses. The question which we have to answer now is whether in 1934 this situation is changing in such a way as to require us to revise our practical attitude towards this question.

We say, when we look over the situation of the past year, definitely: Yes, the situation is changing. There has begun in this year the clearly discernable beginnings of a mass disintegration of the old Party system, the beginnings of the break-up of the old parties, the distinct possibility appears now that a new mass party may come forth out of this disintegration of the old parties, the Democratic and the Republican Parties. This is something new in the political life of our Party which we have not seen since 1923-24 when, in the period following the post-war crisis, a similar breakaway movement developed which was finally corralled into the LaFollette movement. 1923-4

Under present conditions in 1934, what can we say about the possible character and form which such a mass breakaway from the old parties will take? What are the possible variations which such a new mass party will take? It is clear that there is a large number of possible forms in which this movement might emerge. In our resolution we point out four possible variations, four possible types which this movement could take.

What Kind of Labor Party?

First of all it may become a popular, populist or progressive party of the type of the LaFollette party in Wisconsin, of the Sinclair move-

ment, of the Olson, Long movements, crystallized as a new mass party on a national scale.

Or secondly, it might be a party similar in composition and character to that, but which would put forward a name of Farmer-Labor Party, or Labor Party even, differing only in its name and in the degree it developed the demagoguery which would come with such a name.

The third possible variation might be more concretely a Labor Party with a predominant trade union base, with a program concerning immediate demands, possibly with a vague demagoguery about the co-operative commonwealth such as even Olson carries on in Minnesota, but dominated by a section of the trade union bureaucracy organized from above, with the assistance of the Socialist Party and excluding the Communist and the militant elements.

The fourth possibility is that this mass breakaway might crystallize in the form of a Labor Party built from below, as pointed out by the Sixth World Congress resolution, on a predominantly trade union base, including also all mass organizations of the workers, but in conflict with the bureaucracy or with the larger part of it, putting forward a program of demands closely connected with the mass struggles, strikes, unemployment, and so on, with the leading role being played by the militant elements, including the Communists.

Of course you must not understand these four types we list as rigid, fixed things. They can develop in all possible varieties with even parallel developments of different types and at various stages the movement might reflect one type and then another. But these four types that we give as possible variations serve to illustrate the various relation of forces of the struggle between the revolutionary trends and the reformist trends and how they would result in given circumstances in the different types of parties, with a different type of leadership and program and towards which our attitude would have to be different.

We cannot take one and the same attitude towards all the various forms and crystallizations which the breakaway from the old capitalist parties may take on. Our attitude must be varied according to the form which it does take. Especially now, in this early stage of the development, our attitude has to be directed towards helping to determine in advance what kind of form this movement will take, so that we become an active factor in determining what will be the result.

It is clear that we cannot be passive towards this mass breakaway from the old parties. We must have a positive attitude towards it. We must change our negative position towards the Labor Party question,

which was determined by absence of a practical mass movement which made it a practical problem. Now there is a mass movement and it is a question of our Party's participation among these masses and influencing their course.

In our resolution we say that the Party must declare its support for the movement for a Labor Party and fight within this general mass breakaway from the old parties to determine that the party form and character which are taken by the movement shall correspond to this fourth possible variation we have listed and not to any of the others, that it shall be a Labor Party organized from below, reflecting in the closest possible way the mass struggles and bringing forward the militant elements as an integral part of the leadership of such a party.

Our resolution points out very sharply that within this general movement we must carry on a systematic struggle against all attempts to direct it into the channels of the progressive party or a similar party which only masks itself as Farmer-Labor or Labor Party, and so on.

In order to accomplish this, of course, in order to influence this movement at all, we have to be in it and have positive proposals to make. We cannot participate in it effectively if we stand merely as inactive critics of it. Neither can we expect that with such a mass breakaway of millions, in which millions will be shifting from old political allegiances overnight, that these millions will come directly to the Communist Party. We have nothing in our political experiences which would lead us to expect that we, still a small party, can overnight bring these masses to Communism.

We know that before they come to us they will have to go through a process of struggle and education out of their own experience. We know that this process will be much faster and more complete if at all stages of their development these masses see the Communists fighting shoulder to shoulder with them, working together with them in the development of the broadest phases of their mass struggle. That is what predetermines our decision that it is necessary to declare positively in favor of the support for and participation in a Labor Party of that fourth type which we have described.

In our participation in this broad mass movement, of course, our central task is to bring the clear differentiation into two distinct camps, those who want on one hand to develop this mass movement along the moderate, liberal, social-reformist channels and, on the other hand, those who want to develop the struggle of the masses for their im-

mediate interests without regard to or in direct opposition to the interests of private property and profits.

In the struggle for this differentiation within this movement, we will have two dangers which we must avoid, two possible deviations on our part.

On the one hand we will have the danger of sectarian narrowness on our part which would only play into the hands of the reformists. This means, first of all, that the basis for gathering together of the workers into such a Labor Party must be the immediate demands with the broadest mass appeal. We must not allow the reformist leaders to split the masses with speculations on these differences among the masses between those who accept the class struggle clear up to and including the dictatorship of the proletariat, the revolutionary section, those that follow the Communist Party, and on the other hand that larger section of the masses which accepts the class struggle for the immediate issues, but is not yet prepared to go the whole way up to the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Must Avoid Sectarian Danger

The sectarian danger, the danger of limiting down this movement to only the revolutionists and their sympathizers must be at all costs avoided.

At the same time the open Right danger will be the greater danger if we reach the stage of crystallization on a national scale of a mass Labor Party, the danger of opportunistic capitulation, surrender to the reformist trends, practices and habits which will be a very strong factor at work within such a mass Labor Party.

It is clear, as our resolution points out, that in this situation the simple slogan for a Labor Party under which we operated years ago would express such conflicting tendencies that it is not sufficient to be the effective banner for our struggle.

Yes, we are for a Labor Party, but we are for a particular kind of Labor Party. We are for a Labor Party of the nature that we specified in the resolution under the fourth point, the fourth possible type. We are against this movement being organized under the leadership of the LaFollettes, with the program of the Progressive Party. We are against all of these various compromises between the idea of a mass Labor Party and such a progressive bourgeois party. We Communists enter the movement for the Labor Party only with the purpose of helping the masses to break away from the bourgeois camp, break away from

social-reformists and find a path to the revolutionary class struggle.

This means also that all premature organizational moves must be very carefully avoided. In this early stage of the movement it is especially our enemies within this movement that will press most energetically for quick reorganizational crystallization of the new party, before the masses find out what it is all about and while they will still by habit put their old leaders in the positions of responsibility and power.

Our Tasks

On the other hand we must be speeding up the political differentiation within this movement so that when we come to the stage of organization the masses will already have a basis for political choice between the class collaboration and class struggle. We must already have a broad section of this movement crystallized on issues of the class struggle, so that a class struggle leadership will be developed in the organizational crystallization of such a Party. The Communist Party therefore must not now take the initiative in the organization of a Labor Party on a national scale.

In the various states, however, the situation will be of many sorts, according to the various stages of the development of the movement. It will be necessary to study the situation in each place, study the relation of forces, the tempo of development and give a concrete answer in each state and even in each city. Very often we will find in certain cities it will be much further developed than the state as a whole. In those states and cities where the conditions have matured for the formation of a mass Labor Party, we must be prepared to initiate ourselves the organizational steps either directly or through people and organizations close to us.

While we have warned against premature organizational moves, at the same time we must emphasize this does not mean slowness of initiative on our part or lack of initiative. The development in this movement does not necessarily take its first steps with organizational measures.

We have immediately taken political initiative on this question directly from the Political Bureau with the speech which I made, on the decision of the Political Bureau, in Washington at the Unemployment Congress. In this sense we want the greatest initiative displayed.

Only when the masses see the Communists as the political initiators

of those steps which they themselves will conclude are necessary for their own life's interests, only then will we begin to win them for our whole program.

THE PROBLEM OF A LABOR PARTY

By JACK STACHEL

IN his address before the National Congress for Social and Unemployment Insurance Comrade Browder stated that:

"We Communists are prepared to join hands, with all our force, with all our energy, all our fighting capacity, with all who are ready to fight against Wall Street, against monopoly capital, in the formation of a broad mass party to carry on this fight, into a fighting Labor Party, based upon the trade unions, the unemployed councils, the farmers' organizations, all the mass organizations of toilers, with a program of demands and of mass actions to improve the conditions of the masses at the expense of the rich, for measures such as the Farmers' Emergency Relief Bill, the Negro Rights Bill and the Workers' Unemployment and Social Insurance Bill."

To those acquainted with the struggles of the workers in the last decade and the activities of the Communist Party in that period, it is well known that this is not an entirely new position of the Communist Party towards the formation of an inclusive party of labor, supported by the poor farmers—a Labor Party. For many years the Communist Party, as part of its activity in separating the masses from the two old capitalist parties, advocated and worked for the formation of such a Labor Party. The slogan for the building of a Labor Party was for many years one of the central slogans of the Communist Party. If this slogan was not in the foreground during the last period of years it was not because of any fundamental change on the part of the Communist Party on this question. It was rather because it was not a practical slogan of action until now. If now once again it becomes a practical slogan then the causes of this, like the cause for our previous position, is to be found only in the changing situation in the country and especially in the labor movement.

The slogan for a Labor Party became an important and practical slogan during and following the big struggles of the workers in the post-war period. These struggles culminated in the giant strikes of the years 1919-1922 most of which were crushed as a result of the brutal attacks of the employers and the government, aided by the class collaborationist policy of the Gomperses and the Greens, the reactionary heads of the American Federation of Labor. At that time the large numbers of workers who had just entered into the trade unions, comprising important sections in basic industries involving some of the most exploited and oppressed sections of the working class, began to draw political conclusions from the role of the government in suppressing their struggles. They began to see in the government and in the two old parties that constituted the federal, state and local governments, the ruling parties, the instruments of the capitalists, the bankers, the rich. As a result, the workers in the trade unions rebelled not only against the strike policies of the A. F. of L. leaders, they demanded not only amalgamation and industrial unions, but insisted on an end to the so-called "non-partisan" policy of the A. F. of L. and the formation of a Labor Party, expressing the wishes and championing the immediate interests of the masses.

The Communist Party then threw its full force in favor of this expression of the workers to break from the two old parties and for the formation of a Labor Party. The activity of the Communist Party resulted in the fact that the movement for a Labor Party was endorsed by millions of trade unionists and received the support of large sections of the unorganized workers.

Naturally, the ruling class and its agents in the ranks of the labor movement were not slow to recognize this challenge. They could not stop the growth of the movement for a genuine Labor Party merely with the two old parties, even by putting forward so-called "progressive" candidates on the two old party tickets. They resorted to a more serious maneuver. They promoted the formation of a third capitalist party under the leadership of Senator LaFollette, in order to off-set the real danger of the formation of a genuine Labor Party.

In this swindle they received the support of the leadership of the A. F. of L., and of the Socialist Party, then headed by Morris Hilquit.

The LaFollette Trick

In 1924 the LaFollette Progressive Party nominated a national ticket headed by the Republican Progressive, LaFollette, and the Demo-

crat, Bert Wheeler. Despite all the hesitation in the formation of even this third capitalist party, the whole manner in which the bourgeois and reformist leaders tried to dampen and dissipate the spirit of the mass movement of the workers, LaFollette received the votes of close to 5,000,000 workers and poor farmers who believed that by voting for this party they were voting against capitalism and for their own interests.

By this maneuver the "progressive" and reformist leaders succeeded in diverting the genuine movement for a Labor Party into the channels of a third capitalist progressive party. Those who consciously continued the fight for a genuine Labor Party, in addition to the Communist Party, were not large enough to launch a Labor Party on a national scale. In localities and states for the most part a similar situation developed.

Between 1924 and 1929 our Party continued to put forward, as an agitational slogan, the Labor Party. But developments in the country and in the labor movement robbed this slogan more and more of its immediate practical value. In the first place, this was the period of so-called Coolidge "prosperity" and the beginning of the Hooverian period of "permanent prosperity". To be sure, for the large masses of workers, conditions continued to be intolerable and grew worse. But the prosperity ballyhoo had its effect nevertheless. But more important than this was the situation within the trade union movement. The A. F. of L. bureaucracy further developed its policy of class collaboration, adding its so-called trade union capitalism in the form of labor banks, insurance, etc., but above all it became the organizer of efficiency schemes carried through in the interests of the capitalists.

The capitalists, on the other hand, increased their attacks on the living standards of the workers, their attack on the trade unions. The policies of the A. F. of L. bureaucracy in meeting this situation led to the workers retreating from position after position, with the trade unions reduced more and more to narrow craft unions. The more highly skilled workers retained some of their privileges, not only at the expense of the mass of the workers, but also by increased speed-up of the skilled workers. As a result, while profits of the capitalists increased manifold through increased productivity, the real wages of these workers remained stationary or increased but slightly.

With this situation in the labor movement, with the more basic sections of the workers driven out of the unions by the bosses' attacks, and the ruthless expulsion policies of the A. F. of L. bureaucracy, the

a large portion of the vote cast for Roosevelt can be accounted for primarily by the fact that while these masses were already dissatisfied with Roosevelt and his policies they conceived of "practical" politics only through the two-party system. They considered going back to the party of Hoover, a step backward which they refused to take.

The election results show definitely that where the masses had an opportunity to register a vote against Roosevelt and for what they considered more radical parties and candidates they did so, where they thought they had a chance for "success". This is the meaning of the election of the Progressive ticket of LaFollette in Wisconsin, the election victory of the Farmer-Labor Party in Minnesota, etc. Even the votes cast for Sinclair, Long, etc., though still technically for candidates on old party tickets, were an expression of the masses that they demand more than Roosevelt promised.

This movement of the breakaway from the two old parties is causing great worry to the capitalists and their old parties. They are therefore increasing their activity to sidetrack the movement of the masses, which, in large measure, though blindly, is directed against capitalism. Talk of a new, third party, a progressive party, or even a Labor Party, is increasing. The various movements, such as the EPIC, the Father Coughlin's League, etc., are part of the same effort to prevent the

On the basis of this analysis our Party correctly opposed all proposals for a Labor Party in the years since 1929 because it was clear that any party then formed would be either an appendage of the existing old parties, similar to the LaFollette movement of 1924, or embrace only the Communists and their sympathizers.

To work for a Labor Party, no matter what its name, which in reality would be a new third capitalist party, would be against the interests of the masses. Such a party, while it would break the masses away from the traditional two old capitalist parties, would but create a new instrument for the capitalists to achieve their object of keeping the masses chained to capitalism and capitalist parties.

The role of the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party headed by Olson, which differs little in its state politics from the two old parties, and which nationally supports the Democratic Party of Roosevelt, gives full proof of this.

To form a Labor Party out of the Communist Party and its sympathizing organizations would not only not really advance the separation of the broad masses from the capitalist parties but would further

crat, Bert Wheeler. Despite all the hesitation in the formation of even this third capitalist party, the whole manner in which the bourgeois and reformist leaders tried to dampen and dissipate the spirit of the mass movement of the workers, LaFollette received the votes of close to 5,000,000 workers and poor farmers who believed that by voting for this party they were voting against capitalism and for their own interests.

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It at present we see in the slogan for a Labor Party a means of beginning the mass separation of the workers from the capitalist parties it is because the changes that have again taken place in the labor movement (the growth of the trade unions, the entrance of new millions of exploited masses into the struggle, their partial experience in the struggle) already lead these masses to take the first steps in the direction of independent political action. The basis for a genuine Labor Party is being created out of the present struggles of the workers, the sharp character of these struggles, and the movements of the rank and file of the trade unions against the "bourgeois-minded" and reactionary leadership. We wish, first, to help and accelerate these initial steps, and second, to prevent the capitalists and their agents from once more diverting these movements of the masses into "safe" channels. It is for this reason that we emphasize not merely that the workers must organize a Labor Party, but stress especially the character of such a Labor Party, if it is to be in the interests of the masses.

The results of the last elections indicate that the breakaway from the two old capitalist parties is under way. While the expression of this movement is still confused, it is nevertheless taking place. Even

a large portion of the vote cast for Roosevelt can be accounted for primarily by the fact that while these masses were already dissatisfied with Roosevelt and his policies they conceived of "practical" politics only through the two-party system. They considered going back to the party of Hoover, a step backward which they refused to take.

The election results show definitely that where the masses had an opportunity to register a vote against Roosevelt and for what they considered more radical parties and candidates they did so, where they thought they had a chance for "success". This is the meaning of the election of the Progressive ticket of LaFollette in Wisconsin, the election victory of the Farmer-Labor Party in Minnesota, etc. Even the votes cast for Sinclair, Long, etc., though still technically for candidates on old party tickets, were an expression of the masses that they demand more than Roosevelt promised.

This movement of the breakaway from the two old parties is causing great worry to the capitalists and their old parties. They are therefore increasing their activity to sidetrack the movement of the masses, which, in large measure, though blindly, is directed against capitalism. Talk of a new, third party, a progressive party, or even a Labor Party, is increasing. The various movements, such as the EPIC, the Father Coughlin's League, etc., are part of the same effort to prevent the masses from really freeing themselves from the old capitalist parties or, at any rate, to prevent them from organizing a genuine party of labor, having as their purpose to further the capitalist attacks on the masses. The pressure of the masses is also having its reflection in the camp of the A. F. of L. bureaucracy and in the leadership of the Socialist Party, which is also talking of a new party, even of a Labor Party.

What Kind of Parties?

It is, therefore, necessary to be clear as to what kind of parties these bourgeois and reformist elements propose; and what should be the character of a Labor Party that would be a step forward for the masses.

The Political Bureau, in analyzing this question, came to the following conclusion on this point:

"As for the nature of the new mass party, the greatest probabilities reflecting the two chief political tendencies of this movement—the class struggle or class collaboration—are (a) a 'popular' or 'progressive' party based on the LaFollette, Sinclair,

Olson and Long movements and typified by these leaders and their programs; (b) a 'Farmer-Labor' or 'Labor' Party of the same character, differing only in name and the degree of its demagoguery; (c) a 'Labor Party' with a predominantly trade union basis, with a program consisting of immediate demands (possibly with vague demagoguery about the 'cooperative commonwealth' a la Olson) dominated by a section of the trade union bureaucracy, assisted by the Socialist Party and excluding the Communists; (d) a Labor Party built up from below on a trade union basis but in conflict with the bureaucracy, putting forward a program of demands closely connected with mass struggles, strikes, etc., with the leading role played by the militant elements, including the Communists. These variations can develop also parallel or in combination."

This clear formulation not only analyzes the various movements now going on and the possible crystallizations that may take place, but also establishes first the role of the Communist Party and the most advanced workers, the aim we set before ourselves. At the same time, it makes clear that we will not always get these movements in their "pure" form so that they are immediately recognizable. It will require skillful working to direct the mass movement, which will take on numerous forms, into working class channels and this can be done only on the basis of the struggle against the bourgeois and reformist elements that attach themselves to the mass movement.

In this connection the simple slogan "for a Labor Party" "which expresses such conflicting tendencies, of itself is not sufficient to be an effective banner under which the class forces of the workers can be rallied. The Communists enter the movement for a Labor Party only with the purpose of helping the masses to break away from the bourgeois and social-reformist parties and to find the path to the revolutionary class struggle." (From the Political Bureau decision.)

The "Progressive" and Other Types

Certainly the workers do not need a party of the type of the "progressive" party of LaFollette, Sinclair and Co. Such a party would not serve to better the conditions of the masses. Such a party would not help organize the workers for independent working-class political action. On the contrary, such a party would retard the movement of the workers for independent political action. It would continue to chain the masses to the capitalist parties, it makes no difference whether it

would constitute a third capitalist party or become the second capitalist party through the maintenance of the two-party system through a realignment in the camp of the capitalist parties. Whether such a party called itself "Progressive", or "Farmer-Labor" or "Labor" would of course, make no difference.

A "Labor" Party dominated by a section of the trade union bureaucracy and the Socialist leaders and excluding the Communists could not serve the interests of the masses in any way. It would, on the contrary, be used against the workers. A party dominated by John L. Lewis, Gorman, Dubinsky, Waldman, Panken and company, even if it were based on the trade unions, would not be a genuine Labor Party. It would not result in independent class political action on the part of the workers.

The class collaboration policy that these reformists carry through in the field of economic struggle would also prevail on the political field, perhaps with even greater treachery to the masses. Such a party would not fight against capitalism. It would not even fight for the immediate needs of the masses. How can the masses, betrayed by John L. Lewis, Gorman and company in the fight for higher wages, shorter hours, for the right to organize, hope that these people will fight for them in Congress, in the state legislatures, or utilize the organized power of the masses in the form of a Labor Party for mass action to supplement that fight in Congress and the various legislatures? Why, for examples, should we believe that Lewis, Gorman, Dubinsky and company, who oppose the Workers' Unemployment Insurance Bill today, expel members of their unions for fighting for this measure, will fight for it if the workers send them to Congress? They would bring to the workers the Lewis-Wagner fake unemployment insurance scheme, which they now support, with perhaps the difference that instead of it being called the Lewis-Wagner Bill it might be called the Lewis-Waldman Bill, with John L. Lewis replacing Senator Wagner as U. S. Senator from New York State. Nor would it be of any benefit to the workers that, instead of Congressman Dickstein, under the guise of an anti-Nazi investigation, making a sharp attack on the Communists and all militant workers, that this be done, for example, by Jacob Panken, now appointed Judge by Mayor LaGuardia. The fact is that these gentlemen are already, through the *New Leader* and the *Jewish Daily Forward*, competing with the Hearst press in their attack on all militant sections of the labor movement.

The Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party is a combination of both what

the LaFollette Progressive Party is and what such a "Labor" Party, dominated by the Gormans and the Waldmans, would be. The workers and poor farmers of Minnesota have had their conditions improved in no way by the fact that this party is the ruling party in place of the Republican Party.

Nor would such a "Labor" Party be changed in any way by receiving the blessings of and support of the little grouplet around Lovestone that only besmirches the name of Communism by calling itself the "Communist Opposition". It would be much more correct were they to call themselves "opposition to Communism". Such support on the part of the Lovestoneites would only be to carry over the support they give to the Dubinskys and Gormans through the Zimmermans and Kellers into the "Labor" Party.

A genuine Labor Party, consisting of all the trade unions, national and local, mass organizations of the unemployed, etc., who really carry on the struggle for the workers for wage increases, for the Workers' Unemployment and Social Insurance Bill, for the 30-hour week without reduction in pay, for the needs of the farmers, for the rights of the Negro masses, for the right to organize, strike, etc., against the growing menace of war and fascism, led by such militant elements in the trade unions as the leaders of the rank-and-file movement among the steel workers, textile workers, miners, longshoremen, etc., among whom there are militant workers who do not accept the Communist position all the way down the line as well as acknowledged Communists, but who carry on a serious fight against the attacks of the capitalists, as well as against their agents in the labor movement—*such a Labor Party would be a real step forward, and for such a Labor Party the Communists will fight!*

Looking over the situation at this time it seems clear that nothing could be gained if we should, for example, call for the immediate formation of a Labor Party on a national scale. This does not mean that a Labor Party on a national scale can not become a practical step before the next Presidential election. But if it does, it will be only as a result of the developments of local Labor Parties in the meantime.

What could a Labor Party on a national scale, if organized at this moment, be? It would be either a Labor Party organized from the top by the labor bureaucrats, which would, of course, be no real step forward, or it would be too narrow really to represent the wide masses that can, with serious work, finally be rallied toward a Labor

Party on a national scale. The starting point for our work must, therefore, be along two lines. First, general agitation and enlightenment as to the purpose and role of a Labor Party both locally and nationally, and second, to undertake the organization of local Labor Parties in those localities where the situation has become ripe for the building of a local Labor Party with a program, leadership, and mass following that would represent a real step forward in the separation of the masses from the old parties and into a Labor Party that is pledged to and capable of fighting for the immediate interests of the masses.

The Local Problem

But even locally the approach will not always be just the immediate formation of a local Labor Party. Very often the first step will take the natural form which was already expressed in many local elections in the past year, namely, a United Workers' or Labor ticket. This is especially true for the smaller industrial cities and towns, but may also be the case even in large cities. We have had numerous examples of the development of the United Workers' Ticket, as, for example, in Dearborn, Mich., in many towns in Southern Illinois, in Minnesota, etc.

In these local united fronts in the elections the local organizations of the workers, the trade unions, unemployed organizations, the Communist Party, in some cases the locals of the Socialist Party, joined together on a program which expressed the immediate issues on which these organizations had already established a united front.

The issues were of varied character, such as the fight for unemployment relief and unemployment insurance, workers' rights, the struggle against war and fascism, against the criminal-syndicalist laws, for the freedom of Tom Mooney and the Scottsboro boys, and, of course, issues connected with the strike struggles, such as the right to strike, against injunctions, solidarity for the strikers, etc.

In the farming communities, many of the united front issues that brought together organizations of workers and farmers naturally took up the issues confronting the poor farmers. With such a united front already established on one or more of these issues and taking into account the position of the Democratic and Republican Parties and the politicians on these issues, these masses naturally looked for a way to express their demands in united manner also in the elections, with

the result that the united front was carried into the political field in the form of local Workers' Tickets, etc.

It would appear that along these lines there are the most fruitful possibilities for the immediate first steps in the direction of the building of local Labor Parties. Without doubt these first steps and even the first experiences in such actions on the political field will make clear to the participants the necessity to continue this activity, also after the elections, in the form of an organized political force and the building of a Labor Party. In many cases, of course, the Labor Party can and will be organized immediately, once this question is properly taken up.

Let me cite an example of a situation that seems ripe for either a united labor ticket or perhaps even a local Labor Party. Take the City of Paterson for instance. There the textile workers and the textile dyers are for the first time organized. The combined membership of the textile unions is over 20,000 members. The organization of the textile workers, and the strike struggle of the printers of the local newspapers, have already given a labor and trade union consciousness to the great mass of the workers in Paterson and won for the workers' movement the support of other strata of the population who also suffer directly or indirectly from unemployment, taxation, high prices, attacks on workers' rights, etc. Furthermore, the growing activity of the fascist organization is creating a real feeling for the need of solidarity among the masses. The workers especially are becoming conscious of their strength. This is expressed, in the first place, in the rank-and-file movements in the unions against the bureaucrats, big and small.

It also has raised in the minds of many workers the need of a party of labor. The bourgeois politicians are preparing to utilize this sentiment of the workers. Numerous lawyers and politicians are beginning to attach themselves to the labor unions through the labor bureaucrats for the purpose of diverting the sentiment of the workers for a party of the laboring masses into safe channels. Here we have a situation made to order for the building of a local Labor Party, the first step of which may take the form of a united Workers' Ticket. Paterson is, however, no exception. It is typical of many larger and smaller communities where a similar situation exists.

No Substitute for Communist Party

Naturally, within such a united Workers' Ticket, or local Labor Party, the Communist Party will function as one of the participating

organizations, with the full rights to put forward its proposals on every issue and with all the participating organizations and their membership finally deciding democratically on all questions.

But whether the Communist proposals are accepted or rejected, the Communist Party will, of course, always bring forward its full revolutionary program before the masses not only within the Labor Party, but among the masses generally. Because, as we have already said, the Labor Party can never be a substitute for the Communist Party.

While the Labor Party has a program of immediate demands that are in the interests of the workers, while it serves under present conditions in the U.S.A. to accelerate the breaking away of the masses from the capitalist parties and to unite them for independent political class action, the Communist Party does not stop here, but tries to educate and organize the masses not only how best to fight for the immediate demands, but also for the abolition of capitalism, which is possible only on the basis of the revolutionary program of the Communist Party. The fact that the Communist Party has such a program and at the same time energetically participates in the work of the Labor Party, which is not a revolutionary party as is the Communist Party, also emphasizes first that the Communists at all times are concerned with the fight for the immediate interests of the workers, and, second, that the Communists know that only by gaining the support of the majority of the workers for the Communist program can this program be realized.

The Communist Party, for example in Paterson, and this holds good everywhere, would, while promoting the fight for the Labor Party, at the same time take all measures to strengthen itself, to gain influence among the masses, to recruit to the Party, to convince the workers of the correctness of the Party principles and tactics.

What we have said above establishes the general approach that is needed now with regard to the local Labor Parties and the National Labor Party. This does not, however, answer all the questions that will inevitably arise in the situation, since we are not working with "ideal" conditions and since we are not working in a vacuum, but rather are surrounded with open and concealed enemies of the workers.

For Genuine Workers' Leadership

In the first place, such questions will arise as, for example, the bringing forward of resolutions for the building of a Labor Party at the A. F. of L. convention, at the conventions of the various international

unions and other organizations. As we have seen in the past, such proposals will also come from those elements who are trying to organize either a "popular" or "progressive" party under the label of "Labor" Party, or a "Labor" Party of the type we spoke about above—namely, one dominated by the reactionary A. F. of L. bureaucracy and assisted by the Socialist Party or sections of it.

Such problems may, and undoubtedly will, also confront us locally. What shall we do in such situations? It is clear that we cannot advance the interests of the workers by merely supporting such proposals. Nor can we make our position clear by merely voting to reject such proposals. The only correct thing to do will be to bring forward our correct conception of the Labor Party. It is clear, therefore, that the fight for the genuine Labor Party is most closely connected with the fight for genuine workers' leadership in the mass organizations of the workers. In taking up this question the Political Bureau points out that:

"This is also a practical basis for the struggle against the bureaucratic control of the mass movement from above by the Right reformists who want to expel the Communists and the revolutionary rank-and-file members of the organizations."

Another problem that we will face and which we must already face today in some localities, is the existence of so-called "Labor" and "Farmer-Labor" Parties which, though based to a large extent on the workers' and farmers' mass organizations, in their program, leadership, etc., are in reality not parties in the interests of the masses, but "appendages to the existing bourgeois parties". Typical of this situation is the Farmer-Labor Party of Minnesota.

What shall we do in such a situation? It is clear that if we ignore the existence of such a party, we make it easier for the Olsons to continue to betray the masses. We must organize the rank and file of trade unions and the farmers' organizations, the unemployed, etc., who constitute the bulk of the affiliated organizations, and membership as well as the voters of the Farmer-Labor Party within the party, to struggle for a class struggle program at least as far as the immediate issues of the workers are concerned and for leadership that will represent the rank and file, and for the isolation of the Olsons. Just how this separating will finally take place cannot now be definitely stated and without doubt the development will not be the same in each case.

Finally, it must be stated that the building of the local Labor Parties,

the work within the existing parties of the type of the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party, for a genuine Labor Party, can only be successful to the extent that the Party penetrates the mass organizations of the workers and farmers and in the first place the A. F. of L. trade unions, establishes its positions within these organizations. The key to the successful struggle on this field is, therefore, as emphasized already by the Sixth World Congress of the Comintern, and especially in the recent decisions of the Party, the successful development of the work in the trade unions, the carrying through of our tasks in the trade unions on the basis of the struggle on two fronts—against sectarianism and Right opportunism.

THE LABOR PARTY

*(From the Resolution of the Central Committee Meeting,
January, 1935)*

The political changes which have taken place among the masses demand that the Communist Party should review its attitude towards the reviving mass sentiments in favor of a Labor Party and in respect to such a Party if it should be formed on a mass scale. The correct approach to this question was formulated, on the whole, by the Sixth World Congress in 1928, in the following form:

"On the question of the organizing of a Labor Party, the Congress resolves: That the Party concentrate its attention on the work in the trade unions, on organizing the unorganized, etc., and in this way lay the basis for the practical realization of the slogan of a broad Labor Party organized from below."

Since 1929, until now, this correct orientation has necessitated unqualified opposition by the Party to the current proposals to organize a Labor Party which, in this period, could only have been an appendage to the existing bourgeois parties. However, the events in 1934 are beginning to place this question in a new light. The mass disintegration of the traditional party system has begun, and a new mass party may come forward in the near future.

As for the nature of the new mass party, the greatest probabilities reflecting the two chief political tendencies of this movement—the class struggle or class collaboration—are: (a) a "popular" or "progressive"

and reformist workers. It is also in this manner that our Party will be in a position to exercise seriously its revolutionary influence on the broad masses, participating in the movement for a Labor Party and winning them for a real revolutionary policy.

The struggle for the political leadership of the masses who are now breaking away from the Democratic and Republican Parties depends at all stages on the constant growth and strengthening of the C.P. as an independent revolutionary force, for which purpose it is necessary to popularize the Party program to ever broader masses. The chief means to this aim is the bold and energetic development of our work for the united front in all spheres, but above all, in the trade unions, especially those affiliated to the A. F. of L.

The results of the elections showed that Roosevelt's influence upon the masses, while weakened and even shaken to some extent, still remains predominant. The C.P. has insufficiently utilized the opportunities to politically enlighten the masses who are disillusioned in the "New Deal". Bourgeois reformists of the type of Sinclair, the Progressives with LaFollette, the Farmer-Labor Party with Olson, etc., were able to draw in their wake the great majority of those who broke with Roosevelt and the Republicans. This brings forward the necessity of improving and strengthening the political agitation of the Party and more convincingly and firmly exposing Roosevelt's policies, his bourgeois fellow-travelers and opponents from the "Left". While conducting an intense campaign against the extreme Right fascist and semi-fascist representatives of finance capital, the Republican Party, the American Liberty League, etc., it is necessary to show the class kinship of Roosevelt's policy with the policy of his opponents from the Right, explaining to the masses that Roosevelt with the "New Deal" and N.R.A. policy does not embarrass or hinder the carrying out of the policy of finance capital, of Wall Street, but, on the contrary, resorting to more skillful methods, rather makes easier the carrying out of this policy. Only the class struggle against the entire policy of the bourgeoisie can defend the interests of the masses and crush the plans of finance capital and fascism.

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